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Lutheran World Information

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No. 1/92

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SELECT STORIES, JANUARY-JUNE 1992

WORLD'S FIRST WOMAN LUTHERAN BISHOP ELECTED IN GERMANY

HAMBURG, Germany, April 9, 1992 (lwi)--German theologian Maria Jepsen was voted the world's first Lutheran woman bishop here on April 4. Jepsen, 47, a provost in the North Elbian Evangelical Lutheran Church, was elected Bishop of Hamburg by a vote of 78-44 over a male candidate. The outcome was greeted with a standing ovation by church synod members.

Jepsen said she will work to overcome fears of a split in the North Elbian church prompted by her candidacy and bring about "a new community between men and women." "Until now the church has perceived women's abilities one-sidedly and let them serve virtually only at the bottom," she said after her election. "This must not be allowed to continue."

Jepsen was a local pastor in Schleswig-Holstein when she first encountered feminist theology 15 years ago. "Since then I can and will no longer be a 'brother among brothers' but instead a 'sister among sisters and brothers'," she commented. In 1990 she was elected the first woman provost in the North Elbian church. In this office she supervised 41 pastors.

Jepsen replaces the current bishop, 68-year-old Peter Krusche, who will retire on July 31. She was the third woman to candidate for the highest office in the North Elbian church within the last 18 months. In November 1990 Ruth Rohrandt, director of the church's women's desk, failed in her bid to become bishop of the diocese of Schleswig. In April 1991 Käte Mahn, executive secretary of the United Evangelical Lutheran Church in Germany, was unsuccessful in her candidacy for the position of bishop of the Holstein-Lübeck diocese.

The first woman ever to become bishop was Marjorie Matthews whose election in the US United Methodist Church took place in 1980. Eight years later, Barbara Harris was the first woman to be voted bishop in the Anglican communion. Harris was elected bishop in the US Episcopal Church's largest diocese.

* * *

KIDNAPED ETHIOPIAN CHURCH LEADER DECLARED DEAD 13 YEARS ON

ADDIS ABABA, Ethiopia, May 14, 1992 (lwi)--The general secretary of the Ethiopian Evangelical Church Mekane Yesus, Gudina Tumsa, was officially declared dead on April 29, nearly 13 years after he was abducted by an armed group. His remains were located here in the grounds of a palace. The state security department said that the torture and fatal strangulation of Tumsa was carried out by a special death squad of the former Marxist regime's Security Branch.

Tumsa and his wife, Tsehaye Tolessa, were kidnaped as they were leaving an evening church service here on July 16, 1979. Tolessa was released shortly afterward, but Tumsa disappeared without trace. The state security department stated he was held in detention for an unspecified time and then brutally murdered. His body was secretly buried in the grounds of the Ras Asrate Kassa's residence together with the then patriarch of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church, Abuna Theophelos. The palace was used at the time by the state security forces as a recreation center.

Tumsa's brother, Negassa Tumsa, indicated that the motive for the kidnaping and killing of the church leader was his consistent refusal to declare that the ruling Marxist regime was no enemy of the churches and that the churches were able to do their work without state interference.

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AFLC (Association of Free Lutheran Congregations)
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Lutheran leaders committed to regional church work in Africa 15/09
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LWF women's office celebrates 20th anniversary 18/10
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LWF-DTS (Department for Theology and Studies)
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Tackling malnutrition in Bangladesh 05/14
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STRASBOURG INSTITUTE (Institute for Ecumenical Research, LWF-related)

Danish students may win ecumenical study visits 08/14
Third World churches remain wary of ecumenical statement 13/03
Board surveys study projects of ecumenical research institute 13/16

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Thomas Chi-ping Yu remains president of the Taiwan Lutheran Church, contrary to an Update in LWI 03/92. Rev. Kao Ying-Mao, who was mentioned in the item, is president of the Lutheran Church of Taiwan. Both churches are members of the Lutheran World Federation 08/02
The article titled "Black, white South African Lutheran youth ..." in LWI 15/12 should have been credited to Josephine Carlsson of Southern Africa Church News 16/02

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UPDATE: LWF publishes Spanish-language newsletter for women 16/02
Support necessary for women in central and eastern Europe 16/08
UPDATE: Latest LWF publication features plan of action for equality 17/02
UPDATE: 20th anniversary of LWF Office for Women in Church and Society 17/02
UPDATE: Evangelical Lutheran Church in Namibia ordained 4 women 17/02
LWF committee approves 106 projects 17/11
UPDATE: Washington Episcopalians elected woman as assistant bishop 18/02
Archbishop of Canterbury calls on churches to "do mission together" 18/03
LWF women's office celebrates 20th anniversary 18/10
UPDATE: ELCA synod elected first woman bishop 19/02
UPDATE: German Protestant Women's Federation has new general secretary 19/02
Alternative model of development needed, women worldwide say 19/05

WORLD VISION INTERNATIONAL
UPDATE: Former WCC director to head World Vision's Geneva office 10/02

WORSHIP
UPDATE: United Methodists approve new book of worship 19/02

WSCF (World Student Christian Federation)
UPDATE: WSCF issues guidebook to its national movements 16/02

YOUTH
UPDATE: 'Western Youth in the East' is LWF Youth Letter theme 01/02
MECC plans seminar on children in war 01/05
Peace pact fails to rid Salvadoran orphans of doubts and despair, by Tom Brown 03/04
Norwegian bishops speak out for children's rights 04/10
UPDATE: Lutheran World Relief aids Vietnam refugee children in Hong Kong 05/02
Youth movements halt cooperation with Lutheran movement in Denmark 07/13
LIRS seeks end to separation of Vietnamese refugee families 08/07
US Lutheran youth welcome homosexuals 08/09
UPDATE: LWF Youth Letter focuses on environment 11/02
Japanese Lutherans to rejuvenate youth evangelism 11/12

UPDATE: Slovak church sets up youth organization 13/02
UPDATE: Ghana church women help teenage mothers 13/02
Lutheran leaders committed to regional church work in Africa 15/09
DOCUMENT: Communique of African Lutheran church leaders 15/10
Black, white South African Lutheran youth hold first joint meeting 15/12
UPDATE: WCC publication focuses on youth 17/02
LWF committee approves 106 projects 17/11
UPDATE: 80,000 expected at next Taizé European youth gathering in Vienna 18/02
US-LIRS helps Haitian children in asylum-seeking process 19/06
German youth no longer have Christian convictions, new study shows 19/07

YMCA & YWCA (Young Men's Christian Association & Young Women's Christian Association)
Youth movements halt cooperation with Lutheran movement in Denmark 07/13